

Message Text

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SUBJ: RESIGNATION OF LEADER OF PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION

1. AFTER WEEKS OF SPECULATION FREDERICK "SLEEPY" SMITH HAS RESIGNED AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, EFFECTIVE UPON THE ELECTION OF A REPLACEMENT. LOCAL PRESS COMMENTS THAT RESIGNATION IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY TO AT LAST RECOVER FROM ITS ELECTORAL DEFEAT OF SEPTEMBER 1976. DRIFTING SINCE ITS REAL LEADER, FORMER PRIME MINISTER ERROL BARROW, DECLINED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR GUIDING THE PARTY IN OPPOSITION, THE DLP IS AT A CROSSROADS. SMITH, WHO WAS APPARENTLY ORIGINALLY PERSUADED BY BARROW TO TAKE THE JOB, WAS REGARDED AS A TEMPORARY LEADER WHO WOULD SOON GIVE WAY TO EITHER A RE-EMERGENCE OF BARROW AS TITULAR CHIEF OR THE RISE OF YOUNGER TALENT.

2. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO PROVISION OF THE BARBADIAN CONSTITUTION FORBIDDING IT, THE ANOMALY OF AN OPPOSITION LEADER, WHOM NO ONE CONSIDERED THE PARTY'S FOREMOST CANDIDATE FOR THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER, SEEMS TO HAVE MADE THE DLP'S RECOVERY MORE DIFFICULT. ALTHOUGH BARROW HAS NOT COMPLETELY WITHDRAWN HIMSELF FROM THE PARTY'S
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POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, HE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR LACK OF DIRECTION BY DISGUIISING HIS INTENTIONS. SOME COMMENTATORS CONCERNED THAT THIS SITUATION COULD PERSUADE THE PARTY TO SELECT ANOTHER TEMPORARY SECOND-STRINGER AS SMITH'S REPLACEMENT, DELAYING THE DLP'S RENAISSANCE EVEN LONGER.

3. SMITH'S RESIGNATION CAME AS NO SURPRISE. RUMORS THAT HE INTENDED TO GIVE UP THE POST, WHILE STILL, HOWEVER, REMAINING IN PARLIAMENT, HAD BEEN CIRCULATING SINCE AUGUST, AND IN DECEMBER, HE SUGGESTED TO HIS COLLEAGUES THAT THEY THINK ABOUT CHOOSING A SUCCESSOR. RECENTLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE BARBADOS BAR ASSOCIATION, THE FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL STATED THAT ELEVEN YEARS OF TOP GOVERNMENTAL AND PARTY POSTS HAD LEFT TOO LITTLE TIME FOR FAMILY AND OUTSIDE INTERESTS.

4. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT HE WISHED TO DISASSOCIATE HIMSELF NOW FROM A POSSIBLE SHIFT BY THE PARTY TO THE POLITICAL LEFT, WHICH SOME YOUNGER MEMBERS WOULD APPARENTLY LIKE TO MAKE THE CORNERSTONE OF A NEW PARTY PLATFORM. SUCH A PLATFORM WOULD BE DESIGNED TO BEAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT, WHICH PRIDES ITSELF ON BEING A GOVERNMENT OF AND FOR THE PEOPLE, AT ITS OWN GAME, AND COULD POSSIBLY EVEN GO AS FAR AS CALLING FOR THE NATIONALIZATION OF PORTIONS OF THE ISLAND'S INDUSTRY. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS PRESUMABLY NOT INTERESTED IN SUCH A DEPARTURE, IN PART BECAUSE OF THE BLP'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE ESTABLISHED MERCANTILE COMMUNITY. OTHERS SPECULATE THAT SMITH WANTS TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM EVIDENCE OF CORRUPTION DURING DLP'S LONG TENURE WHICH INVESTIGATIVE COMMISSION IS EXPECTED TO ESTABLISH.

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5. SEVERAL NAMES HAVE BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS TO SMITH. ONE ASPIRANT, RAMESES CADDLE, WHO HAS MADE STRIDENTLY RADICAL STATEMENTS OF LATE IS NOT GIVEN MUCH CHANCE. TWO YOUNG DLPERS, ERSKINE SANDIFORD AND BRANFORD TAITT, ARE POSSIBLE REPLACEMENTS AND BARROW HIMSELF COULD BECOME A CANDIDATE AT ANY POINT. AT PRESENT, SMITH'S WITHDRAWAL MAINLY SIGNIFICANT AS INDICATION OF TURMOIL IN DLP.

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